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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000949

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAGR](#) [ETRD](#) [MARR](#) [CH](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: LY SPEAKER WANG JIN-PYNG ON CROSS-STRAIT
RELATIONS, KMT POLITICS, ARMS SALES, BEEF

Classified By: AIT Director Stephen M. Young,
Reason(s): 1.4 (B/D).

¶1. (C) Summary: During a June 30 meeting with the Director, Legislative Yuan (LY) Speaker Wang Jin-pyng (KMT) asserted the LY is entitled to supervise cross-Straits negotiations and ratify cross-Straits agreements. This would ensure that Taiwan's sovereignty and security are not impugned, and the interests of Taiwan's people are adequately protected. Weekend cross-Straits charter flights and increased PRC tourism are the easy issues, but future agreements that touch on sensitive questions of sovereignty and international participation will not come so easily, Wang warned. Wang inquired about U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, worrying that Congress may not have enough time to approve sales before the end of the Taiwan fiscal year in December. KMT Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung and many legislators are upset with Ma, particularly over the disrespect shown by cabinet members, claimed Wang, who predicted the LY will express its dissatisfaction by giving a hard time to Ma's nominees for the Control and Examination Yuans. End Summary.

Provocative Interview?

¶2. (C) The Director asked about the pro-green "Liberty Times" lengthy interview of Wang published that morning, June 30, in which Wang had called for legislative involvement in and oversight of cross-Straits negotiations, including requiring LY ratification of any cross-Straits agreements. Wang insisted the only reason the interview had been published in the Liberty Times was because the paper had requested it, and he denied choosing a pro-green newspaper to send a message to President Ma Ying-jeou. (Comment: We're not convinced.)

¶3. (C) Wang asserted to the Director that the LY is legally entitled to supervise cross-Straits negotiations, and morally obligated to ensure that resulting agreements do not diminish Taiwan's sovereignty or security. The LY is also charged to protect the interests of Taiwan's 23 million citizens. Admitting he had not yet discussed the matter with President Ma, Wang said he was confident that others in the KMT, including Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) Chairman P.K. Chiang and KMT Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung, would respect the LY's role as spelled out by law.

¶4. (C) Legislators would not be active participants in the cross-Straits negotiation process, Wang explained, but would

observe and privately ask questions of SEF Chairman Chiang and other Taiwan representatives if necessary. In this way, he continued, those legislators present during the negotiations would be able to answer questions from the rest of the LY, smoothing the ratification process for any resulting cross-Strait agreement.

Cross-Strait Only Going To Get Harder

15. (C) Wang characterized the recent progress on cross-Strait charter flights and increased PRC tourism as the "easy" first steps on a long road that is bound to become more difficult. Voters understood that most details for these agreements were hammered out during the Chen administration, Wang maintained, so they expected Ma to deliver quick results. As cross-Strait talks progress, he continued, the discussions will increasingly delve into more sensitive matters like Taiwan's sovereignty and international space.

16. (C) The Director remarked that Washington continues to urge Beijing to adopt a practical, flexible approach toward negotiations with Taiwan, but the Chinese government, especially the Foreign Ministry, is slow to change. Wang expressed optimism that Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) Chairman Chen Yunlin would visit Taiwan during the course of SEF-ARATS talks. Chen Yunlin has indicated that he wishes to visit Taiwan, said Wang, and unlike former president Chen Shui-bian, President Ma has placed no conditions on Chen Yunlin's visit to Taiwan.

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Arms Sales Delay?

17. (C) Wang asked about rumors that some U.S. officials had sought to prevent the Taiwan arms sales notifications from going to Congress. He worried that Congress would not have enough time to complete the approval process before the Taiwan fiscal year ends this December. The Director reminded Wang that arms sales to Taiwan are a sensitive and complicated matter. Stressing that the glare of media publicity complicates the handling of such sensitive issues, the Director urged Wang not to raise the profile of this subject by discussing our exchanges in public.

KMT Unhappy With Ma, Especially His Cabinet

18. (C) KMT Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung as well as numerous KMT LY caucus members are dissatisfied with Ma "on many fronts," Wang volunteered, particularly over Ma's choices for the Cabinet, and their failure to honor procedure or to show respect for party leaders. (Note: KMT legislators were incensed by Premier Liu Chao-shiuan's mid-June failure to consult them before introducing a budget bill on projects to expand domestic demand, and Liu was also roundly criticized for mishandling recent food, oil, and gas price increases. End note.) Wang said he expects the KMT caucus to express its dissatisfaction by holding up approval of administration nominees for the Control Yuan (dormant since January 2005) and Examination Yuan. Aside from the 25-30 at-large and overseas legislators who depend on the party for their nominations, the rest of the KMT caucus will either drag their feet on approving the nominations, or will actively oppose them, predicted Wang.

Beef: Wait 'til Things Simmer Down

19. (C) Turning to the issue of U.S. beef imports, Wang said Taiwan officials would have to wait until things cool down from the South Korean uproar before the political climate here would allow them to move forward on beef. Pork would be even harder because of Taiwan's sizable domestic pork

industry. The Director pushed for a more specific time frame, asking if three months would be sufficient to nail down an agreement on beef. Wang indicated something in that ballpark would be a good estimate. In the meantime, he encouraged us to work with the Department of Health and Council on Agriculture to get the scientific facts out to the Taiwan public in a low-key manner.

Comment

¶10. (C) His protests notwithstanding, Wang's provocative interview in a pro-Green newspaper represents something of a gauntlet thrown down to the new administration on cross-Strait negotiations in particular and policy generally.

With no love lost between the LY Speaker and his president, it seems Wang senses an opportunity to assert himself into the KMT power mix. All this suggests the KMT party unity that assisted sweeping electoral victories earlier this year is breaking down. It will be interesting watching how President Ma, who has claimed to be interested in a lower key presidential profile, will respond to this challenge.

YOUNG